

SELF-CARE

*How to live mindfully
and look after yourself*



CLAIRE CHAMBERLAIN

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and look after yourself*



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summersdale

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INTRODUCTION

If you often find yourself feeling “burnt out” by the pressures and strains of everyday life, it could be time to introduce a little self-care into your daily routine. Despite the name, self-care is certainly not selfish – it simply means taking steps toward looking after your own mental, emotional, spiritual and physical well-being. This book is packed full of practical, easy-to-adopt tips and inspiring quotations to help enrich the most intimate and long-lasting relationship in your life – the one you have with yourself.

**Self-care means giving
yourself permission to
pause.**

Cecilia Tran

BE CLEAR ON SELF-CARE

When looking to care for yourself more fully, it's important to understand what "self-care" means. The term refers to any deliberate act you undertake that protects and nurtures your own physical, mental, emotional and spiritual health. It doesn't just entail pampering. Instead, self-care encompasses a number of practices, from eating healthily and exercising to becoming more mindful and embracing meditation, which can relieve stress and anxiety, while nourishing your body and soul.

**IT'S NOT SELFISH TO
LOVE YOURSELF, TAKE
CARE OF YOURSELF,
AND TO MAKE YOUR
HAPPINESS A PRIORITY.
IT'S NECESSARY.**

MANDY HALE



Let go of guilt

Often the biggest barrier to self-care is guilt. Feeling bad about spending time tending to your own needs is common, especially if you feel you should be caring for someone else or doing something that appears outwardly more productive. But remember, taking time to look after your own mental and physical well-being will ultimately leave you with more reserves of energy to invest in others, not less. It's time to drop the guilt and recognize self-care as a wholly necessary, healthy and vital act.

Carve out and
claim the time to
care for yourself and
kindle your own **fire.**

Amy Ippoliti

GIVE YOURSELF PERMISSION

One of the simplest ways to drop any residual guilt is to give yourself permission to take time out for yourself. Often we get so caught up in our many roles and responsibilities that we don't feel we are allowed to prioritize ourselves. So remind yourself now that your mental and physical health are absolutely a priority, then give yourself the green light to act on this new-found awareness.

**Rest and self-care are so
important... You can not
serve from an empty
vessel.**

Eleanor Brownn

**Love yourself enough to
set boundaries. Your
time and energy are
precious. You get to
choose how you use it.**

Anna Taylor

SCHEDULE SOME “ME TIME”

With all of the other daily tasks you need to complete, it's easy to demote yourself to the bottom of your to-do list. So schedule some time for self-care each day – physically writing it down in your diary, or setting an online reminder, means you will be more likely to follow through with your intention.

Some days you may find a whole hour or evening for self-care, while on others five minutes to sit quietly and focus may be all you get. No matter how little time you have, block it out in your diary, to ensure the moment doesn't get swallowed up by everyday chores and other responsibilities.



*Self-care is never selfish,
but it may feel that way
when you live a frenzied
life.*

ARTHUR P. CIARAMICOLI

**TIME YOU ENJOY
WASTING IS NOT
WASTED TIME.**

MARTHE TROLY-CURTIN

FINDING THE TIME

Figure out the moments of the day when you can make time for yourself. Even if you have a packed schedule, there will be pockets of time to set aside for self-care. Early mornings, lunch breaks and evenings are common times of the day when you might have some alone time. Think also about times where you're simply waiting – waiting for a train, for food to cook in the oven, or for your child's after-school activity to finish. These are perfect moments for self-care, such as getting lost in a book, going for a mindful stroll, sipping a hot cup of tea, or meditation – it can be whatever you fancy! Carve out these pockets of free time for yourself.

**ALMOST EVERYTHING
WILL WORK AGAIN IF
YOU UNPLUG IT FOR A
FEW MINUTES,
INCLUDING YOU.**

ANNE LAMOTT

Switch off each day

Being constantly connected in an “always-on” world can feel overwhelming sometimes. Even in your downtime, you might find yourself staring at screens, answering messages and getting sucked into social media. One of the simplest and easiest ways to recharge is to switch off, both physically and mentally: turn off or remove any electronic devices, close your eyes, take a series of deep breaths and allow yourself to tune into your senses.

**WHEN YOU SAY “YES”
TO OTHERS, MAKE
SURE YOU ARE NOT
SAYING “NO” TO
YOURSELF.**

PAULO COELHO



***It's only by saying "no"
that you can concentrate
on the things that are
really important.***

STEVE JOBS

BECOME COMFORTABLE WITH “NO”

Saying “no” can be hard. We are often socialized to believe that refusing other people’s requests for help is selfish. We worry we’ll appear uncaring or, worse, damage our relationships. But what if, by saying yes, you’re risking your own mental and physical health? The sad fact is that, in an effort to be liked, many of us take on additional chores, projects and responsibilities without pausing to consider how this will affect our well-being. Next time someone asks you for a favour, don’t agree automatically. If you want to say no, be kind but firm, such as: “Thanks for asking, but I’m afraid I can’t this evening.” (Note that you don’t have to justify your decision with a reason either!) Alternatively, if you aren’t confident enough to be so direct, buy yourself time. Saying, “Let me check my diary and get back to you,” allows you to step away from the situation and consider how the request will affect your own time and energy levels.

**Saying yes to happiness
means learning to say
no to the things and
people that stress you
out.**

Thema Bryant-Davis

Lighten up on
yourself. No one is
perfect.
Gently accept your
humanness.

Deborah Day

BE YOUR OWN BEST FRIEND

We all have an inner voice – and, quite often, it seems to spend its time making snarky, unhelpful remarks! When you have negative, critical thoughts about yourself, stop for a moment and question whether you would say these things to your best friend. Chances are you would not, because you would never be unkind to another person. Flipping it in this way might leave you shocked at just how unkind you are to yourself. Instead, try being as kind to yourself as you would to a loved one – after all, you are absolutely worthy of love, especially from yourself.

**SELF-COMPASSION IS
SIMPLY GIVING THE
SAME KINDNESS TO
OURSELVES THAT WE
WOULD GIVE TO
OTHERS.**

CHRISTOPHER GERMER

**Belonging is not fitting
in... Belonging starts
with self-acceptance.**

Brené Brown



Forgive yourself

Part of being kind to yourself is recognizing that everyone makes mistakes – they're a natural part of development. Next time things go wrong, don't be hard on yourself. Instead, accept what has happened. Make sure you are accountable and apologize if necessary, then forgive yourself fully. Learning from mistakes and moving on is far healthier than continually berating yourself and feeling forever guilty.

**EMBRACE THE
GLORIOUS MESS THAT
YOU ARE.**

ELIZABETH GILBERT

**Be nice to yourself. It's
hard to be happy when
someone is mean to you
all the time.**

Christine Arylo

SWAP “SHOULD” FOR “COULD”

The vocabulary you use, even internally, plays a big role in how you view your responsibilities in life. Simply by switching the word “should” for “could” when talking about plans is a fantastic way of reducing the pressure you put on yourself. Telling yourself you “should” clear your work inbox is very different to telling yourself you “could” clear your work inbox: the latter ensures there’s no guilt if it doesn’t quite happen. Flexible plans are far better than setting yourself rigid structures that must be adhered to.



***Seasons change, people
grow together and apart,
life moves on. You will be
OK, Embrace it.***

ALEXANDRA ELLE



***How we care for
ourselves gives our brain
messages that shape our
self-worth, so we must
care for ourselves in
every way, every day.***

SAM OWEN

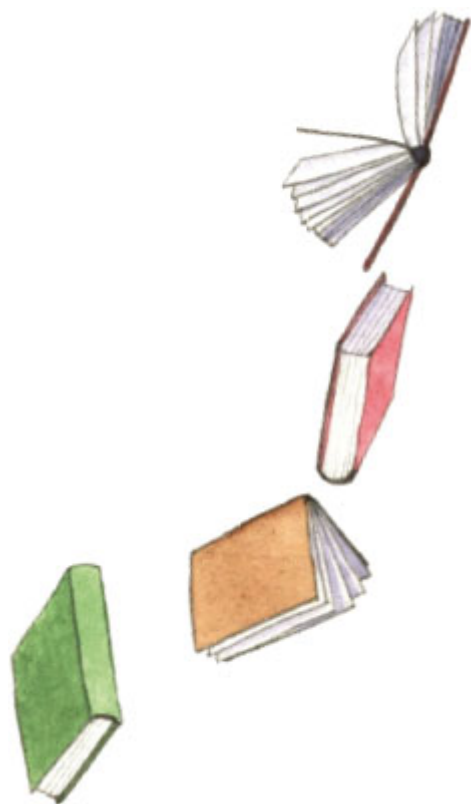
**The only person who
can pull me down is
myself, and I'm not
going to let myself pull
me down any more.**

C. JoyBell C.



REPEAT POSITIVE AFFIRMATIONS

As awkward as it can feel when you first start, positive self-talk is a wonderful way to cancel out any limiting beliefs that might be hanging around in your mind. The key to affirmations is in repetition: if you repeat them often enough, they will become beliefs, and once you believe these powerful statements about yourself, it will have a profoundly positive impact on your life. Positive affirmations should mean something to you, so choose to say something you want to start believing about yourself, or something that reflects how you wish to lead your life. Examples could be “I choose to feel happy in my mind, body and soul”; “I am adventurous, fearless and free”; “I am perfect exactly as I am”; “I forgive past mistakes and live mindfully in the present moment”; or “I am beautiful, unique and interesting”. Take care to use the present tense and phrase them positively rather than negatively (“I am” rather than “I am not”). Once you’ve honed your personalized affirmations, say them aloud to yourself several times a day. You could even write them down and leave them where you will see them often, such as on your bedside table or bathroom mirror. Your affirmations will soon become your reality as you begin to believe in them fully.



KEEP A GRATITUDE JOURNAL

Take a few moments to write down the things you are grateful for each day. Many of us take our blessings for granted, or get so caught up in our daily lives that we never stop to appreciate what we have. By listing three or more things you're grateful for daily, from hugging a loved one to a delicious home-cooked meal, you will become fully conscious of all the ways you are fortunate – an experience that can make you feel instantly happier.

**Change your thoughts
and you change your
world.**

Norman Vincent Peale

DON'T AIM FOR PERFECTION

Do you sometimes find yourself striving for perfection, feeling that you will only be worthy once you have become the “perfect” student/ employee/colleague/ parent? The problem with perfection is it’s a state that’s impossible to attain. If this is what you’re aiming for, you will find yourself consistently falling short of your own high expectations, which can leave you feeling dejected and as though you have failed. It’s time to let the idea of perfection go. Still try your best, of course, but realize that being “good enough” truly is good enough. This way, you can never fail. Adopting this mindset also frees you up to try new hobbies, start new friendships or relationships, or go for that promotion: suddenly you don’t have to be the best, you simply have to try your best, and if it doesn’t work out, you can just try your best somewhere else, knowing that you are perfect exactly as you are... imperfections and all!

**There's incredible
power in creating a
sense of self- worth
that's rooted in your
own validation and
acceptance.**

Daniell Koepke

**Nobody's perfect, so
give yourself credit for
everything you're doing
right, and be kind to
yourself when you
struggle.**

Lori Deschene



***Be thankful for what you
have; you'll end up
having more. If you
concentrate on what you
don't have, you will
never, ever have enough.***

OPRAH WINFREY

**I THINK HAPPINESS IS A
CHOICE. IF YOU FEEL
YOURSELF BEING
HAPPY AND CAN
SETTLE IN TO THE LIFE
CHOICES YOU MAKE,
THEN IT'S GREAT.**

DREW BARRYMORE



Smile more

While it doesn't seem very natural to give a big cheesy grin when you're in a bad mood or feeling low, smiling on purpose can actually help to lift your mood and make you feel better. The reason? The very act of smiling alters your brain chemistry, prompting the release of the feel-good neurotransmitters serotonin, dopamine and endorphins. So even when you're worried, anxious or stressed, try a smile and the good mood may follow. As the saying goes, fake it till you make it!

**LAUGHTER IS AN
INSTANT VACATION.**

MILTON BERLE

HAVE A LAUGH!

There's nothing quite like a heartfelt belly laugh to boost your sense of well-being. In fact, studies have shown that laughing triggers the release of endorphins in the body. What's more, laughter has also been shown to lower blood pressure and increase antibody production, which improves your ability to fight infection and disease. So make time to watch your favourite comedy or listen to a funny podcast – you'll be doing your mind and body a favour and having fun while you're at it!

Laughter is the
tonic, the **relief,**
the **surcease** for
pain.

Charlie Chaplin

CHAT WITH A FRIEND

You might be surprised by just how good it feels to have a long natter with a friend, especially if you haven't been in touch for a while. Opening up to a loved one is truly cathartic, so make time to connect properly with someone you care about. If you're feeling low or depressed, it might seem difficult to start talking to a friend or family member about how you're feeling, but take comfort in the fact that many people report feeling much better after sharing their thoughts and experiences. If you don't feel up to talking to a friend, either in person or on the phone, why not send them a text message to let them know how you're doing?

**WE SET THE STANDARD
FOR HOW WE WANT TO
BE TREATED. OUR
RELATIONSHIPS ARE A
REFLECTION OF THE
RELATIONSHIP WE
HAVE WITH
OURSELVES.**

IYANLA VANZANT



*The present moment is
filled with joy and
happiness. If you are
attentive, you will see it.*

THÍCH NHẤT HẠNH

BECOME MORE MINDFUL

Mindfulness simply means becoming aware of the present moment: calmly noticing any thoughts, feelings or bodily sensations you may be experiencing, but without making any judgement. It's a way of reconnecting with your body, and the world around you, without the worries which stop you experiencing the present fully and consciously. Ensuring you are present and aware of the moment – whether you're performing breathing techniques, meditating, eating delicious food or sipping a cup of tea – will help you experience it more deeply, heightening your sense of fulfilment and relaxation. Drawing your attention to the present moment sounds simple, but it can take a little practice, so don't worry if you struggle at first. As soon as you notice a thought or emotion arise that takes your mind away from the present moment, acknowledge it without judgement, and then simply draw your attention back to the “now”.

**Although the world is
full of suffering, it is full
also of the overcoming
of it.**

Helen Keller

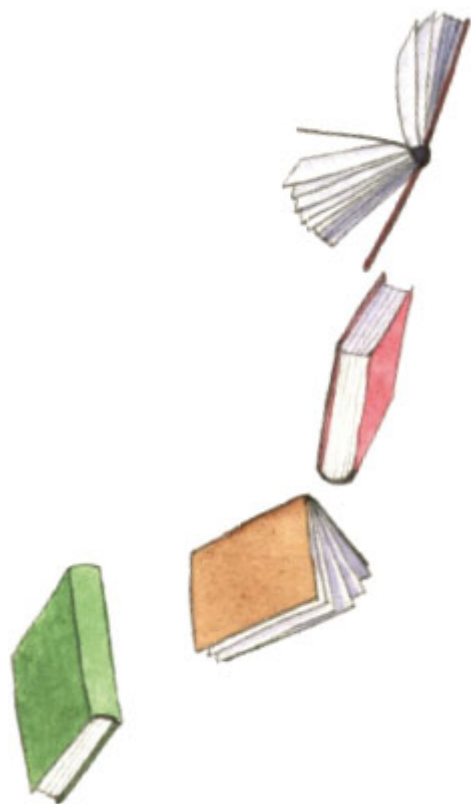
Let go of the **past**, let
go of the **future**. Let
go of the **present**.

Buddha



PRACTISE MEDITATION

Meditation is essentially focused attention. It can have a wonderfully calming effect, helping you to recharge and leaving you with a greater sense of well-being and increased energy. You could try to set aside a little time each day when you will not be disturbed, such as early morning, to meditate. To begin, ensure you're sitting comfortably, either on a chair or cross-legged on a cushion. Keep your back straight and upright, and gently close your eyes. There are many different meditation techniques, some of which focus on breathing, others that entail becoming aware of bodily sensations or focusing your full attention on an external object. Whichever you decide to try, aim to clear your mind of all other thoughts or emotions. If you notice thoughts creeping back in, simply draw your mind back to the focus of your attention, without guilt or judgement. Aim for just ten minutes daily to begin with – even a short session can make a big difference to your physical and emotional health.



**Wherever you are, be
there totally.**

Eckhart Tolle

**SURRENDER TO WHAT
IS. LET GO OF WHAT
WAS. HAVE FAITH IN
WHAT WILL BE.**

SONIA RICOTTI

PERFORM A “BODY SCAN”

A body scan meditation is a wonderful way to become fully aware of your body in the present moment and, while relaxation is not the end goal, it's a common side effect.

To begin, sit or lie in a comfortable position, loosening any tight clothing so you don't experience constriction. Take a few deep breaths to prepare yourself for the meditation, then start to bring your awareness to your feet: pay attention to the weight of them on the floor, note any sensations such as pain, warmth or coolness, tension or ease.

The aim is not to judge or change how your body is feeling, but simply to notice. Next, move your awareness slowly up your body, scanning your legs, buttocks, hips, pelvis, lower back, stomach, chest, upper back, shoulders, arms, hands, fingers, neck, jaw, cheeks, eyes, forehead and temples, noting how each body part feels in that moment. Bringing awareness, as opposed to thoughts, into your body is very grounding and can instil a sense of peace. There is no time limit on a body scan – you could try it for five minutes at first. You can also find guided body scan meditations online.

TRY REIKI

The term “reiki” is derived from the Japanese words *rei* (meaning “universal”) and *ki* (meaning “life energy”), and is an alternative therapy commonly known as energy healing. It is said to involve the transfer of universal energy from the practitioner’s palms to the patient’s body and, while its effectiveness is hard to prove in scientific terms, many who receive reiki are convinced it works. Reiki aims to increase your life-force energy, which in turn improves physical, mental and spiritual well-being, promotes healing, aids relaxation, relieves stress and invokes a feeling of deep peace – perfect for self-care.

**He who lives in
harmony with himself
lives in harmony with
the universe.**

Marcus Aurelius

EMBRACE SIMPLE PLEASURES

Make a list of your favourite small, simple pleasures, and then plan to include them into your day-to-day life. It could be getting up early to watch the sun rise, picking wild blackberries, heading for a gentle stroll in the woods, feeling the sun's warmth on your skin, or snuggling under the duvet on a chilly evening. Deliberately undertaking these little moments will fill you with happiness and help any stress to melt away.

**Every act of self-care is
a powerful declaration:
I am on my side.**

Susan Weiss Berry



Seek out activities that make you happy

Partaking in activities that make you happy should definitely be on your weekly to-do list! Think about all the people, places and hobbies that make you feel great – it could be spending time with a close friend, visiting the coast, exercising, baking or camping. Then try to ensure you incorporate these activities into your everyday life whenever possible.

**THE MOST SIMPLE
THINGS CAN BRING THE
MOST HAPPINESS.**

IZABELLA SCORUPCO

TREAT YOURSELF

Treating yourself for no reason is guaranteed to put a spring in your step and a smile on your face. You don't need to splash out lots of cash, either (indeed, that could be counterproductive!) – why not buy yourself a bunch of your favourite flowers, that novel you can't wait to read, or a new accessory in your favourite colour?

If your
compassion
does not **include**
yourself. it is
incomplete.

Jack Kornfield

**Meditation can help us
embrace our worries,
our fear, our anger; and
that is very healing.**

Thích Nhất Hạnh

**Within you there is a
stillness and a sanctuary
to which you can retreat
at any time and be
yourself.**

Hermann Hesse

Have a massage

Investing in a massage is a wonderful way to care for yourself. Not only can it promote a deep sense of relaxation throughout the whole body, but it has also been proven to ease stress, alleviate depression, improve circulation, soothe away pain, relieve digestive disorders and lead to a better night's sleep – perfect for calming your mind, body and soul.

**TENSION IS WHO YOU
THINK YOU SHOULD BE.
RELAXATION IS WHO
YOU ARE.**

CHINESE PROVERB

**Solitude is creativity's
best friend, and solitude
is refreshment for our
souls.**

Naomi Judd

SPEND TIME ALONE EACH DAY

There is a big difference between feeling lonely and spending time alone. A little solitude each day is a wonderful way to quieten your mind, still your thoughts and reconnect with yourself. What's more, research now shows that time alone helps to increase empathy, productivity, creativity and mental resilience. So take a moment to yourself each day, however short, and enjoy the peace.

**SOLITUDE HAS ITS OWN
VERY STRANGE
BEAUTY.**

LIV TYLER

**SOMETIMES YOU JUST
HAVE TO STOP, TAKE A
DEEP BREATH AND PUT
THINGS IN
PERSPECTIVE.**

KATRINA MAYER

BREATHE MORE DEEPLY

Taking the time to breathe consciously and deeply, also known as diaphragmatic breathing, is a centuries-old technique that helps to relieve anxiety and stress, making it a perfect self-care practice. The beauty of performing breathwork is that it can be done virtually anywhere and you don't need lots of time, so it's a wonderful way to introduce self-care into each and every day. To begin, simply ensure you're sitting comfortably in a peaceful setting, then start to breathe consciously, focusing on elongating each inhale through your nose, feeling your belly expand and rise, and then exhaling for the same length of time. The scientific reason behind why it's such a powerful way to unwind lies in the fact that breathing deeply interrupts the body's "fight or flight" response, instead triggering relaxation.

**Sometimes the most
important thing in a
whole day is the rest we
take between two deep
breaths.**

Etty Hillesum

I felt my lungs inflate with
the onrush of scenery —

air,
mountains,
trees, people. I
thought, “This is what it is
to be **happy.**”

Sylvia Plath

CONNECT WITH NATURE

Spending time in the natural world can have an impressive restorative effect on both your mind and body – in fact, numerous scientific studies point to the fact that being outside in nature can help to ease stress, fight anxiety and depression, reduce inflammation, improve short-term memory, lower blood pressure, boost your immune system and spark your creativity. So get out there whenever you can: stroll through woodland, walk barefoot on the grass, hug a tree, take a dip in the sea, grow a plant from seed – whatever takes your fancy!

**Thousands of tired,
nerve-shaken, over-
civilized people are
beginning to find out
that going to the
mountains is going
home that wildness is a
necessity.**

John Muir

**We need the tonic of
wildness... We can
never have enough of
nature.**

Henry David Thoreau



***People who love
themselves come across
as very loving, generous
and kind; they express
their self-confidence
through humility,
forgiveness and
inclusiveness.***

SANAYA ROMAN

GET SOME SUNSHINE

While getting too much sun is detrimental to your health, exposing you to ultraviolet rays that put you at risk of skin cancer, heading outside in natural daylight is important for your well-being. As well as making vitamin D directly via sunshine, your body produces more mood-boosting serotonin when exposed to sunlight, helping to make you feel happier and more alert. Aim for 15 minutes outside in the sunshine each day whenever possible, with your face, arms and hands exposed, to gain maximum benefit. These short bursts are especially important during the autumn and winter months, when reduced daylight hours and long, dark evenings can make you feel tired and lethargic.

**EXERCISE IS AMAZING,
FROM THE INSIDE OUT.
I FEEL SO ALIVE AND
HAVE MORE ENERGY.**

VANESSA HUDGENS

**To enjoy the glow of
good health, you must
exercise.**

Gene Tunney

FIND A WORKOUT YOU ENJOY

Taking care of your physical health is of the utmost importance, so try to incorporate exercise into your daily routine. Current guidelines recommend 150 minutes of exercise each week (that's just 30 minutes, five times a week), and it should be brisk enough to raise your heart rate. Exercise offers a whole host of physical benefits, including improved fitness, weight management, and lowering your risk of heart disease, type 2 diabetes, high cholesterol and stroke. But there's more... physical activity promotes the release of endorphins into your bloodstream, which boosts your mood, lowers stress and eases depression. So get moving! Don't fancy sweating it out in a gym? That's fine. It's important to choose an exercise you enjoy, so you have fun and stick with it. There are so many options, including brisk walking, jogging, swimming, horse riding, boxing, rock climbing or dancing, so think outside the box!

**Do something today that
your future self will
thank you for.**

Sean Patrick Flanery

**Take care of your body.
It's the only place you
have to live.**

Jim Rohn

GO FOR A WALK

The humble walk boasts a multitude of fantastic physical health benefits, including building stamina, burning calories and improving your cardiovascular health. On top of that, walking is a perfect way to ease stress and enhance positive and calming energy. A walk through green space, such as a park or woodland, or near water, such as a stream or coastal path, only serves to enhance these effects. The beauty of walking is you don't need any specialist equipment, nor do you need to be super fit to reap the rewards, making it a simple but effective way to practice self-care.

**Be healthy and take care
of yourself, but be
happy with the
beautiful things that
make you, you.**

Beyoncé

TRY YOGA

Yoga is a spiritual practice that focuses on uniting the mind, body and spirit (the term “yoga” is rooted in the Sanskrit yuj, meaning “to unite”). It blends physical postures (asanas) with meditation, and can help to create a sense of balance within the body, improving flexibility and strength, while also evoking a sense of peace and stillness. Yoga is for everyone, not just the super flexible, so give it a try – if you’re new to yoga practice, seek out a beginner or hatha (slow, gentle yoga) class.



***The only way to achieve
beauty is to feel it from
inside without breaking it
down into individual
physical attributes.***

MILEY CYRUS

**TO BE BEAUTIFUL
MEANS TO BE
YOURSELF. YOU DON'T
NEED TO BE ACCEPTED
BY OTHERS. YOU NEED
TO ACCEPT YOURSELF.**

THÍCH NHẤT HẠNH

FUEL YOUR BODY WELL

Eating a healthy, balanced diet is an important act of self-care that will benefit both your body and mind. By fuelling your body correctly, you will be taking an active and positive step toward good overall health, which will see you achieve a healthy body weight, reduce your risk of developing cardiovascular disease and improve your self-esteem. When looking to eat healthily, avoid fad diets and instead aim to eat enough protein (for example, lean meat, fish, tofu, beans, pulses and nuts), carbohydrates (for example, wholegrain bread and pasta, rice and starchy vegetables) and healthy fats (for example, avocados, oily fish, nuts and olive oil), as well as a wide variety of vitamin-rich fruits and vegetables. Start viewing food in terms of its nutritional value, to ensure you're well fuelled and energized.

**TO ENSURE GOOD
HEALTH; EAT LIGHTLY,
BREATHE DEEPLY, LIVE
MODERATELY,
CULTIVATE
CHEERFULNESS AND
MAINTAIN AN
INTEREST IN LIFE.**

WILLIAM LONDEN



***Beauty is how you feel
inside, and it reflects in
your eyes. It is not
something physical.***

SOPHIA LOREN

BOOST YOUR VITAMIN B INTAKE

Ensuring you are taking on a good balance of vitamins and minerals is vital for good self-care, with B vitamins especially important in helping to regulate your mood. If you're feeling low, try boosting your intake of B vitamins, which play an important role in the control of tryptophan, which in turn is key for serotonin production – the neurotransmitter thought to contribute to feelings of well-being and happiness. B vitamins can all be found in a healthy, balanced diet, but especially in eggs, avocado, yeast extract, poultry and liver, with fortified cereals and milk alternatives offering a great source, too. So top up on these for a happiness hit!

**Your diet is a bank
account. Good food
choices are good
investments.**

Bethenny Frankel

**Health is not about the
weight you lose, but
about the life you gain.**

Josh Axe

DRINK MORE WATER

Ensuring you drink enough water each day to stay adequately hydrated is not just vital for your physical well-being; it may also help to reduce feelings of anxiety and fatigue, and boost mood and concentration. As well as regulating bodily functions, flushing toxins from your system and promoting healthy-looking skin and hair, several studies have demonstrated that hydration is imperative for good mental health. All of which means that drinking plenty of water each day is one of the simplest forms of self-care there is. Current guidelines state that drinking six to eight glasses of water is best for optimum health. If you're unsure whether you're dehydrated, the best way to test is to check the colour of your urine. It should be a pale straw colour. Any darker, and you can simply reach for a glass of water to get back on track!

**GOOD NUTRITION
CREATES HEALTH IN
ALL AREAS OF OUR
EXISTENCE. ALL PARTS
ARE INTERCONNECTED.**

T. COLIN CAMPBELL



Cut down on alcohol

Many people drink alcohol as a way to unwind, but when focusing on self-care it would be wise to try to cut down on alcohol as much as possible. While it's true that alcohol can initially help induce feelings of relaxation, this is short-lived and is very often outweighed by negative effects, including anxiety and disturbed sleep. Alcohol is a depressant, and regular drinking will likely leave you feeling stressed, tired and less able to cope with daily life. Cutting back on that glass of wine or bottle of beer in the evenings will help boost your sense of well-being and positivity.

CHOOSE HEALTHIER COMFORT FOODS

As well as being linked to weight gain and an increased risk of developing diabetes, consuming too many high-sugar or processed foods can also negatively impact your mental health. Scientists think the blood sugar fluctuations and inflammation associated with eating too many refined foods increase your risk of mood swings and depression, as well as leaving you feeling lethargic and less able to cope with stress. So say no to temptations like crisps and cake, and opt for comfort foods that nourish and fuel you instead – think hearty soups, warming stews, berry smoothies, avocados, nuts and seeds, or a few squares of dark chocolate.

Learning to **love**
yourself is like learning to
walk — essential,
life-changing.

Vironika Tugaleva

RELAX IN THE BATH

A long soak in a warm bath at the end of a busy day is the perfect way to switch off and unwind, doing wonders for your mind, body and soul. Try adding your favourite bath oil or, if your muscles feel super tense, a scoop of magnesium sulphate flakes, to ease away aches and pains, and promote good skin health. Use your favourite bath products and, for a spot of extra luxury, light a few candles to set the soothing, restorative mood.



***When you recover or
discover something that
nourishes your soul and
brings joy, care enough
about yourself to make
room for it in your life.***

JEAN SHINODA BOLEN

**There is only one corner
of the universe you can
be certain of improving,
and that's your own
self.**

Aldous Huxley

EXPERIMENT WITH ESSENTIAL OILS

Essential oils are a wonderful way to combat stress and alleviate anxiety, making them perfect for a spot of simple self-care. Some of the best oils to help promote a sense of peacefulness and calm include lavender, rose, vanilla and frankincense. You can use them in a variety of ways, including inhalation or applying them directly to the skin with the aid of a carrier, such as olive oil. Try applying a few drops to a tissue and breathing in the scent for instant relief; sprinkling a little on your pillow to aid a restful night's sleep; adding a few drops to your bath for a restorative soak; or mixing with a carrier oil and massaging into the skin, to ease muscle tension.

Take a nap

Taking a nap is a fabulous way to take care of your mind and body, allowing you to rest and rejuvenate before waking to tackle the rest of your day. As our days seem to become ever busier, it's important to slow the pace occasionally – and a mid-afternoon snooze is the perfect way to do so! Taking a nap has been shown to lower tension, decreasing your chance of developing heart disease, as well as boosting afternoon productivity, increasing alertness and improving mood. Just remember to set an alarm so you don't snooze right through until dinnertime!

**SELF-COMPASSION
SOOTHES THE MIND
LIKE A LOVING FRIEND
WHO'S WILLING TO
LISTEN.**

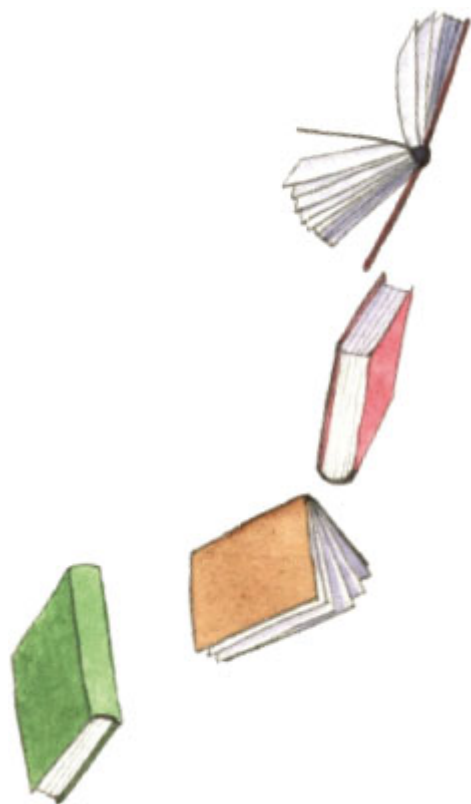
CHRISTOPHER GERMER



CREATE A CALMING BEDTIME ROUTINE

The end of the day is one of the easiest times to introduce more self-care into your life, as you are less likely to be disturbed and your body will be naturally winding down after the day's activities. To ensure you have the most restful night's sleep possible, create your own nurturing and calming bedtime routine, including practices and rituals that make you feel loved, relaxed and peaceful.

If possible, avoid any electronic devices in the hour leading up to bedtime, as the blue light they emit alters your levels of sleep-inducing melatonin. Instead, read a chapter of your book, rinse away the stresses of the day with your favourite facial cleanser, pop on your cosiest pyjamas, massage your hands and arms with lavender-scented body cream, and take a moment before sleep to perform a breathing meditation with the lights low. Bliss!



**Sleep is the best
meditation.**

Dalai Lama

**Finish each day before
you begin the next, and
interpose a solid wall of
sleep between the two.**

Ralph Waldo Emerson

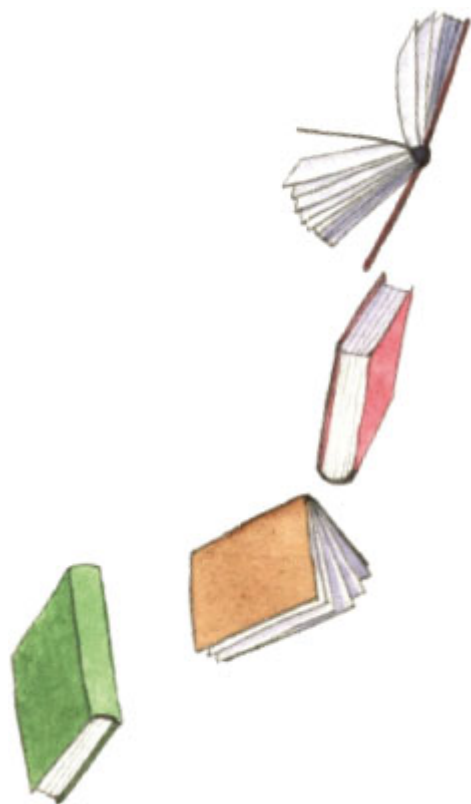
FEEL REVIVED BY SLEEP

Lack of sleep can impair your judgement and concentration, and increase feelings of stress and anxiety, so making sure you get enough is a critical aspect of self-care. Sleep is a vital physiological process that, over the course of the night, restores both your mind and body. Experts are in agreement that eight hours of shut-eye is about the right amount for most adults – although you will likely need to be in bed for longer to ensure you achieve that amount... perhaps nine or even ten hours. If you struggle to sleep, try implementing your relaxing bedtime routine (pp.124–125), and then aim to get into bed 15 minutes earlier every evening for a whole week. You might be amazed at the difference it makes to your energy levels and well-being.



ASK FOR SUPPORT

If you're feeling overwhelmed by a task, or feel you have more on your plate than you can comfortably handle, there is no shame in asking for help from others. In fact, learning how to enlist support when you need it, rather than striving to get everything done by yourself, is an important component of looking after yourself. Not only will it take the pressure off you, helping to relieve stress, but it will also free up more of your time to invest in replenishing your own energy. If you're not accustomed to asking for help from others, these simple steps will help: first, acknowledge you need support from someone else – accepting you have limitations is a strength, not a weakness. Next, assess exactly what you need help with, so you can figure out the best person or group to ask. Being specific will make it much easier. Next, ask! You'll be amazed at how empowering it can feel to take action by enlisting the help of another person.





***A cup of tea is a cup of
peace.***

SEN SŌSHITSU XV

**THE MORE YOU EAT,
THE LESS FLAVOUR;
THE LESS YOU EAT, THE
MORE FLAVOUR.**

CHINESE PROVERB

SAVOUR A CUP OF TEA

You might find the tension drops from your shoulders just thinking about sitting down with a hot cup of tea – and for good reason. People have relaxed over cups of tea for thousands of years – in fact, in the 1100s, formal Zen Buddhist tea-drinking ceremonies were created with the aim of aiding meditation. Studies back this up, with tea drinking shown to have similar effects on the brain as meditating, stimulating alpha brainwaves associated with deep relaxation and enhanced clarity. And – depending on the type you drink – tea has also been shown to adjust serotonin and dopamine levels, increasing feelings of happiness. Bored of your regular tea? There are so many different varieties to try: peppermint can boost your mood and aid digestion; ginger can give you an instant pick-me-up; and turmeric can improve immune function, with its antioxidant, antibacterial, antiviral and anti-inflammatory properties. So, make time in your day to sit down and relax with a cuppa – it will be good for your soul.

**Rainy days should be
spent at home with a
cup of tea and a good
book.**

Bill Watterson

CURL UP WITH A GOOD BOOK

Many people know from experience that curling up on the sofa with a book is the ultimate feel-good activity. And, believe it or not, the feeling of deep-seated relaxation that comes from reading has scientific backing – researchers have found that picking up an engrossing book can help you to de-stress and unwind, as it offers an escape from the everyday world. So pick up that paperback and lose yourself in its pages.



***I think in life you should
work on yourself until the
day you die.***

SERENA WILLIAMS

Embrace your creativity

Expressing yourself creatively is incredibly fulfilling, and the best thing is it's never too late to get started! Have a think about what you'd love to try – options include mindful colouring, sketching, creative writing, baking, knitting or taking up a musical instrument. Don't worry if you're not an expert or that you don't want others to see your work – the satisfaction and self-care lies in the doing, not the end result. And who knows, reawakening your creativity might unearth a hidden talent!

**YOU CAN'T USE UP
CREATIVITY. THE MORE
YOU USE, THE MORE
YOU HAVE.**

MAYA ANGELOU

**NOURISHING YOURSELF
IN A WAY THAT HELPS
YOU BLOSSOM IN THE
DIRECTION YOU WANT
TO GO IS ATTAINABLE,
AND YOU ARE WORTH
THE EFFORT.**

DEBORAH DAY

GET LOST IN MUSIC

Music can have a profound impact on your body. Numerous studies point to the fact that listening to tunes you love stimulates the release of dopamine in the brain, thereby reducing stress and increasing happiness. What's more, a study has shown that actively engaging with music (say, by dancing or singing) correlates with even higher levels of happiness. So next time you play your favourite tracks, jump onto your feet and dance around your living room!

I think **music** in
itself is **healing**.
It's an **explosive**
expression of
humanity.

Billy Joel

Work your way through your to do list

Feeling frazzled, flustered and unable to keep up with the mounting tasks and chores that keep racing around your head? Then write them down! Creating a to-do list is a simple and effective way of freeing up your short-term memory, helping you feel calmer and more in control. Seeing your to-do list written down in black and white can make everything seem more manageable, plus being able to physically cross each task off your list once it's completed will help you feel more organized, capable and empowered. It might not seem like the most fun aspect of self-care, but it will certainly help to reduce your stress levels, which is vital for your well-being.

**ASK FOR HELP, NOT
BECAUSE YOU'RE
WEAK, BUT BECAUSE
YOU WANT TO REMAIN
STRONG.**

LES BROWN

DECLUTTER YOUR HOME (OR EVEN ONE DRAWER!)

The term “self-care” might not immediately spring to mind when you think of decluttering your home but, in fact, getting rid of unwanted and unnecessary possessions can feel instantly cathartic. Clinging to material belongings and being constantly confronted with cramped cupboards and surfaces is often associated with stress. Conversely, creating a clutter-free, minimalistic living space can instantly ease your mind and promote calm. So set aside a whole day, or even just ten minutes, to declutter all or some of your home – perhaps work through just one drawer every chance you get. Don’t just chuck everything in the bin – you could donate to charity shops or a local refuge centre for an added feel-good factor.

**What you put into life is
what you get out of it.**

Clint Eastwood

**Love yourself first and
everything else falls into
line. You really have to
love yourself to get
anything done in this
world.**

Lucille Ball

**I DON'T FOCUS ON
WHAT I'M UP AGAINST.
I FOCUS ON MY GOALS
AND I TRY TO IGNORE
THE REST.**

VENUS WILLIAMS



Set yourself a new goal

Stepping outside of your comfort zone, or doing something you've dreamed of, is a simple and exciting way to boost your self-esteem. Think about a goal that sparks a fire inside of you – from signing up to drama classes or joining a book club or visiting a country you've always longed to see. Make sure it's a goal that's fully yours and not a dream that's influenced by someone else, or something you feel you "should" be excited by.

**You must go on
adventures to find out
where you truly belong.**

Sue Fitzmaurice

**IF YOU DON'T VALUE
YOUR TIME, NEITHER
WILL OTHERS.**

KIM GARST

PLAN A SHORT GETAWAY

Taking a break from your usual routine is a wonderful way to switch off, relax and spend some time looking after yourself. Physically getting away from it all can be the perfect nudge to help you do this. So why not book a short break away for a night or two? You could decide to go alone, or with a friend or loved one. Spend some time seeing the sights or experiencing new things, but also try to leave some time unscheduled, where you can simply unwind. If a minibreak isn't an option for you at the moment, why not set aside a weekend to be a "tourist" in your home town? Visit somewhere nearby that's new to you (or long forgotten), sit in a café and watch the world go by, or set time aside to read an engrossing book. By simply giving yourself permission to treat a weekend at home like a weekend away, it will help you embrace that relaxed holiday vibe.

**WHEN YOU ARE
COMPASSIONATE WITH
YOURSELF, YOU TRUST
IN YOUR SOUL, WHICH
YOU LET GUIDE YOUR
LIFE.**

JOHN O'DONOHUE

CONTINUE TO NURTURE YOURSELF

This book has hopefully given you lots of ideas and inspiration about how to care for and nourish your mind, body and soul. By continuing to include time for self-care each and every day – even if it's sometimes just for a few minutes – you will likely find yourself feeling calmer, happier and more self-assured. And always remember, if you start to feel overwhelmed, anxious or worried, just pause for a moment and take a few deep breaths, to reset your sense of calm.

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